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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **MORSE MUSEUM WILL ACQUIRE HISTORIC MERITA BREAD SIGNS**

WINTER PARK, FL—The Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art will acquire the landmark Merita Bread neon sign through a gift from Maudlin International Trucks of Orlando.

For eastbound travelers on Interstate 4, the towering Merita Bread sign was the unofficial lighted gateway to Orlando for more than 50 years. The Merita Bread Bakery shut down in November 2012. Merita Bread broke ground on its plant at 2200 S. Division Ave. in 1960.

Earlier this month, Maudlin purchased the property from Flowers Foods, which last year bought the assets of Merita's parent company, Hostess Brands. Maudlin plans to develop a state of the art dealership representing International® commercial trucks on the property.

The Merita Bread sign was one of many iconic and locally beloved neon signs designed by the late Bob Galler of Orlando's Graphic Systems Inc. Galler told the *Orlando Sentinel* in 2004 that the Merita sign originally had a round clock with hands on the top rather than the digital display and that it also used to say "Merita Bread & Cake" instead of just "Merita Bread."

The donation from Maudlin International Trucks includes three signs. The larger two, which are visible from I-4, measure approximately 18 feet high by 30 feet long. In addition, the gift includes the neon letters from the building front that spell out "Merita Bread

Company.” The Morse Museum will remove the signs for storage on November 12 and 13.

“The Morse is thrilled and grateful to be able to add these historic signs to our collection of Florida art,” said Director Laurence J. Ruggiero. “They are splendid examples of this lively American art form that warrant respect and preservation for the benefit of the future generations.”

The Museum’s collection includes signs from more than 50 local companies, shops, and restaurants. The more famous include Ronnie’s Restaurant, McNamara Pontiac, and Gary’s Duck Inn—also designed by Bob Galler.

While the museum has no immediate plans for exhibiting its sign collection, it continues to collect based on design, condition, and historic importance to the community.

The Morse Museum, 445 N. Park Ave., Winter Park, Florida, is home to the world’s most comprehensive collection of works by Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933). The Morse is owned and operated by the Charles Hosmer Morse Foundation and receives additional support from the Elizabeth Morse Genius Foundation. It receives no public funds. For more information, please visit [www.morsemuseum.org](http://www.morsemuseum.org).

Maudlin International Trucks, 2300 S. Division Ave., Orlando, Florida, is the leading medium and heavy duty commercial truck dealer serving the Central Florida market. With nearly 300 employees, the company operates six dealerships covering 23 counties representing International® commercial trucks. Maudlin International Trucks, doing business as Idealease of Orlando and Jacksonville, also provides commercial truck leasing and rental and offers mobile and dedicated maintenance services. Additional information can be found at [www.maudlininternational.com](http://www.maudlininternational.com).

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